



The President's Daily Brief

May 15, 1975

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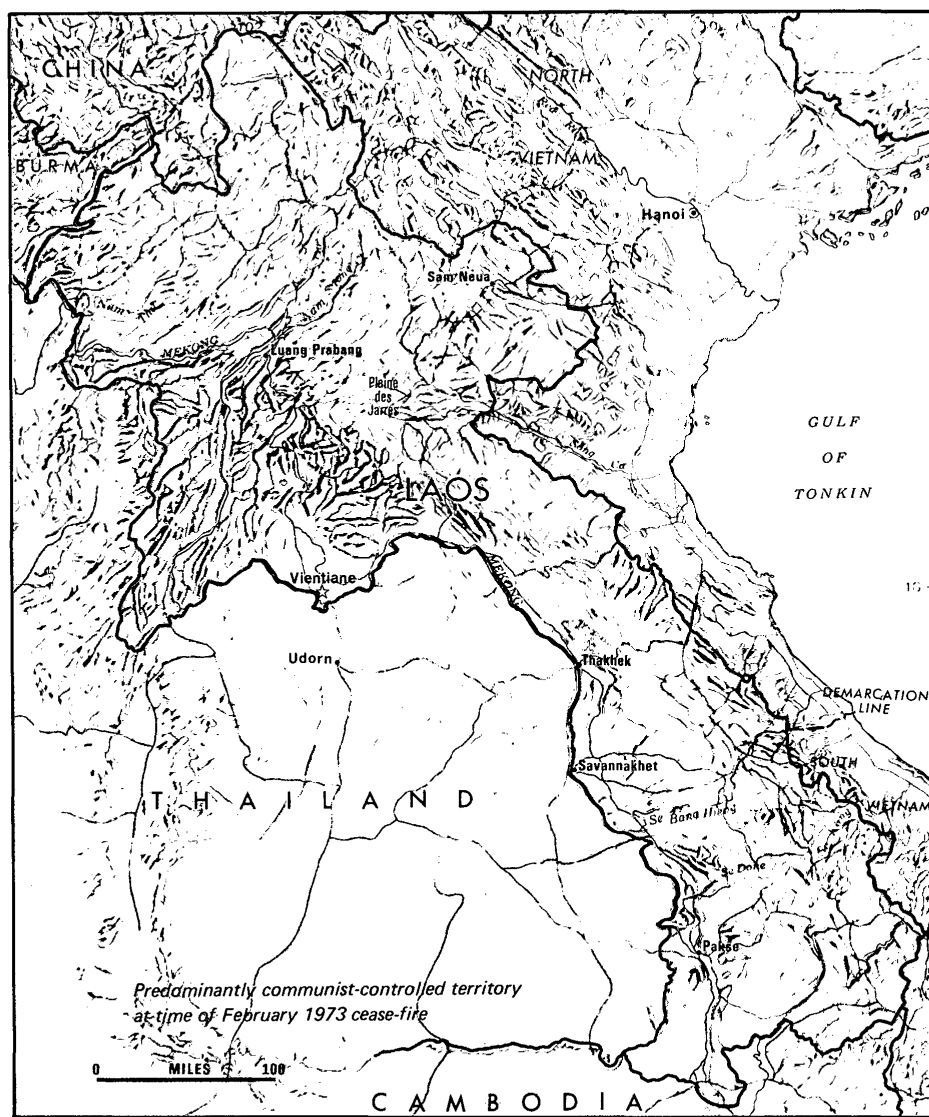
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LAOS

The Pathet Lao are encouraging student activists, political opportunists, war veterans, and labor organizations to mount increasingly hostile street demonstrations against US government installations and personnel in Vientiane and other major urban areas.

The Pathet Lao's minimum objective appears to be the elimination of USAID and other American organizations from provincial Laos. If the statements of communist Deputy Prime Minister Phoumi Vongvichit are to be believed, however, the Pathet Lao may be willing to tolerate--at least for the moment--a reduced US official presence in Vientiane. They also appear willing, and in some cases even anxious, to receive unconditional US assistance, provided such aid is channeled directly to the coalition government now effectively under their control.

The demonstrations against USAID facilities in Luang Prabang have ended, but are continuing in Savannakhet. Student agitators in Savannakhet have occupied the USAID compound and are still holding hostage three of its American employees and the area's rightist provincial governor. According to a late report, the Americans are being well treated and are in phone contact with USAID officials. The students are demanding that the coalition government send a delegation to remedy their grievances, which are a carbon copy of those recently espoused by the so-called "People's Liberation Movement" in the southern rightist stronghold of Pakse. Aside from the ouster of USAID, these demands include:

--"Neutralization" of Savannakhet and the rest of the central Laotian panhandle provinces and their direct administration by the coalition government.

--Removal from office of most civilian and military rightist officials, and the formal ouster of Prince Boun Oum na Champassak as inspector general of the Kingdom.

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--Freedom of movement and commerce between non-communist and Pathet Lao zones in central and southern Laos.

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No Americans have been seized during the demonstrations in Luang Prabang, but the USAID compound there has been thoroughly vandalized and a number of local business establishments looted. All official US personnel and their dependents were safely evacuated by air from the royal capital to Vientiane late yesterday.

Demonstrations began last night in Thakhek--still another southern rightist bastion--and others are scheduled over the next several days in Vientiane.

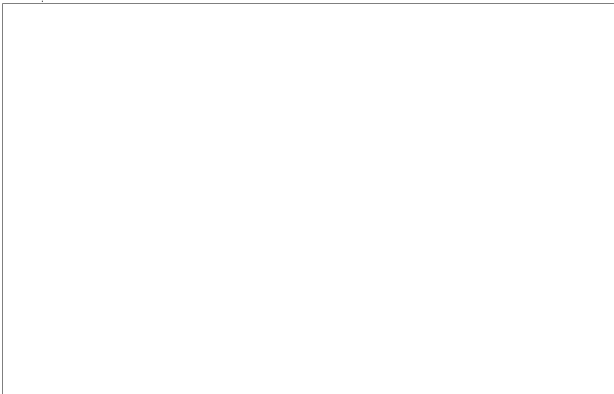
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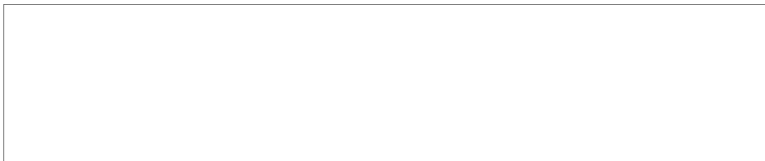
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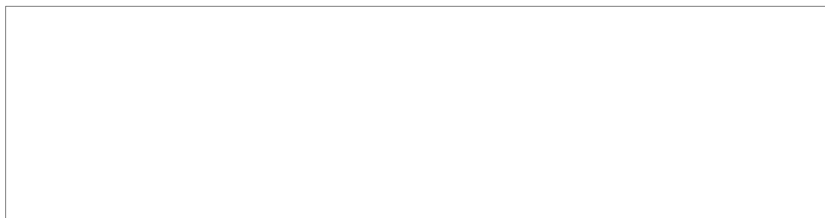
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CSCE

Most delegations at the European security conference believe that the next few weeks in Geneva will be crucial. The pace of the conference has increased perceptibly, some issues have been settled, and a working group has begun planning for a final summit-level meeting. Nevertheless, if the conference is to conclude this summer--as the Soviet and virtually all other delegations hope--many issues will have to be resolved in a relatively short time.

While Soviet negotiators recently have shown flexibility on some matters, they have stalled on others and even reopened debate on several issues considered settled months ago. Basically, the Soviets apparently are counting on the Western participants to give in and stop trying to wring concessions. The West European delegations are having difficulty matching the determination and resolve of the Soviet Union.

The Soviets recently accepted a French compromise proposal that ended a long deadlock concerning the declaration of principles that the conference has been formulating as a guide to international relations. The conference has yet to reach agreement, however, on the wording of a "saving clause" implying that the rights and responsibilities of the US, UK, France, and the USSR in Germany and Berlin are not affected by the conference's decisions. Many of the neutral delegations read the present draft as an affirmation of the "Brezhnev doctrine" on intervention in Eastern Europe.

Soviet negotiators have also shown some flexibility on one of the major military-related "confidence-building measures," but only after the Western and neutral delegations made an important concession to Moscow. The Soviets said that they could accept the Western idea of providing advance notice about national and multinational military maneuvers, if the notification were voluntary.

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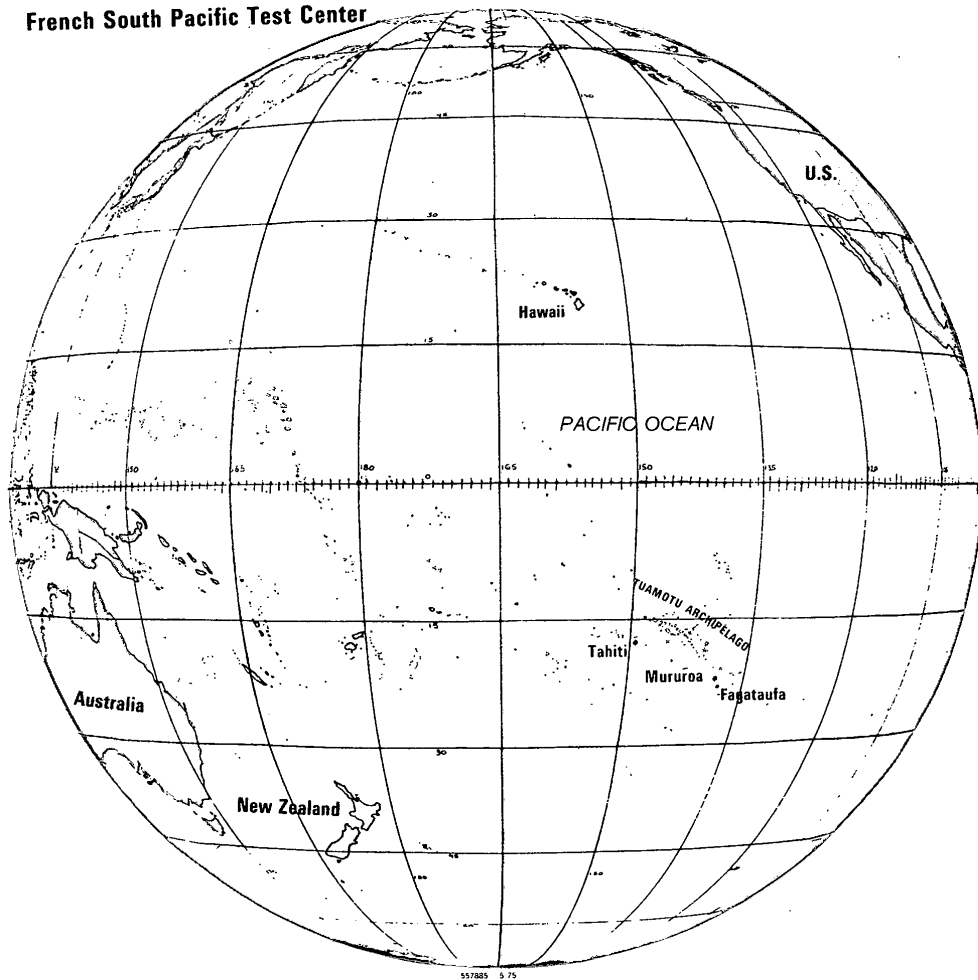
The Soviets have continued to stall on matters concerned with the freer movement of people and ideas. Western negotiators now intend to present a single text covering all such topics. They argue that such an initiative now would put maximum pressure on the Soviets to come to reasonable terms. The Soviets' attitude on this subject, however, is such that they may well continue to stall.

The question of follow-on machinery to the conference also remains to be resolved. The Soviet side says it wants a post-conference consultative committee with a broad mandate to discuss issues affecting security and cooperation in Europe. The committee would have a permanent secretariat, one of the more objectionable features of the proposal as far as the West is concerned. There is some reason to believe that the Soviets--perhaps worried by the great opportunity a standing mechanism would give to the Romanians and other bloc members to needle Moscow--eventually will settle for something less permanent.

The Western delegations formally support a Danish proposal that calls for senior officials to meet three years after the conference ends to assess the results and decide whether further meetings are needed. The West Europeans, however, are sharply split on the issue. The Dutch, Belgians, and French advocate as little follow-on activity as possible, while the British and now even the Danes are prepared to accept relatively frequent meetings of experts and senior officials. Other NATO members continue to support the formal Danish proposal. On this issue, as on many others, the NATO allies are hoping that the US will take the lead.

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French South Pacific Test Center



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NOTES

France is expected to conduct its first underground nuclear test in the South Pacific before the end of the month.

The French issued a "notice to mariners" in February warning ships and planes to stay outside a 42-mile danger zone surrounding the Mururoa and Fagataufa atolls through the end of the year. Only one or two tests, both underground, are expected this year.

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Israel's military activity in southern Lebanon over the past three days appears aimed as much at the Lebanese as at the fedayeen.

Harassment of Israeli reconnaissance patrols by Lebanese mortar fire last week apparently was the principal cause of the recent Israeli actions, which included raids into villages and the taking of prisoners. The approach of today's anniversary of the Arab attacks at the time of Israeli independence in 1948--often the occasion for fedayeen terrorist incidents--was probably another factor. Israeli units routinely patrol inside Lebanon's southern border, but had not entered villages or taken captives since the major clashes with fedayeen and Lebanese army units last January. No casualties have been reported from this week's activities, and Israel announced yesterday that it had released some of the villagers taken during the raids.

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